

# Archived Information

---

## Introduction

---

No nation can be strong or great without providing for the growth and development of its next generation. This strategic plan represents the five-year vision beginning in Fall 2000, for the Department of Education to fulfill its national education responsibilities. This vision is built upon a decade of increasing national recognition of the importance of education and the need for a leadership role for the U.S. Department of Education in achieving national education goals.

Since education is a state and local function in the United States, the primary Federal role in education has been to encourage and support state, local, institutional and private efforts to ensure that all students receive a world-class education. Our nation has made many improvements in educational quality and access in recent years. This strategic plan documents the next steps the Department of Education needs to take at the Federal level to continue to prepare our students educationally to be productive workers in a demanding workplace and productive citizens in an increasingly interconnected society.

The Department of Education's mission is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence for all students throughout the Nation. We have a special obligation to ensure that all students have the opportunity to meet the challenging standards of educational excellence. This commitment often requires that we focus our resources and activities on students who are most at risk of educational failure. The Department of Education helps to ensure that students from all backgrounds—regardless of race, national origin, color, disability, age, or gender—have the opportunity to achieve excellence under the American educational system. Where this plan states that “all” students are the focus of a particular national objective or strategy, it means just that.

To achieve effective education reform that meets the needs of all students, many partners must be involved: students; parents; educational leaders at the school, district, and state levels; community members, businesses, and religious groups; and government at all levels. The U.S. Department of Education will continue to focus its support and activities to strengthen these core components of the U.S. education system.

Key roles of the Department to carry out our mission, as follows:

- Leadership to address critical issues in American education.
- Grants to education agencies and institutions to support state and local reform; strengthen teaching and learning; strengthen schools and institutions; and prepare students for citizenship, employment, and lifelong learning.
- Student grants and loans to help pay for the costs of postsecondary education.
- Grants for literacy, employment, and self-sufficiency training for adults.
- Monitoring and enforcement of civil rights to ensure nondiscrimination by recipients of Federal education funds.
- Support for statistics, research, development, evaluation, and dissemination of information to improve educational quality and effectiveness.

## GPRA, the Strategic Plan, and the Annual Plans and Reports

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), enacted in 1993, ushered in a new era of performance accountability for Federal agencies. This legislation stipulated that Federal programs and agencies would be judged by performance, not by spending. Federal agencies are now responsible for developing both 5-year strategic and annual plans, which include explicit goals and objectives. Furthermore, Federal programs must track and report to Congress annually on their progress toward and achievement of those goals and objectives. The Education Department has moved to incorporate the ideas underlying GPRA—such as results-focused management, performance measurement, coordination and streamlining—into its daily practices.

### Exhibit 1

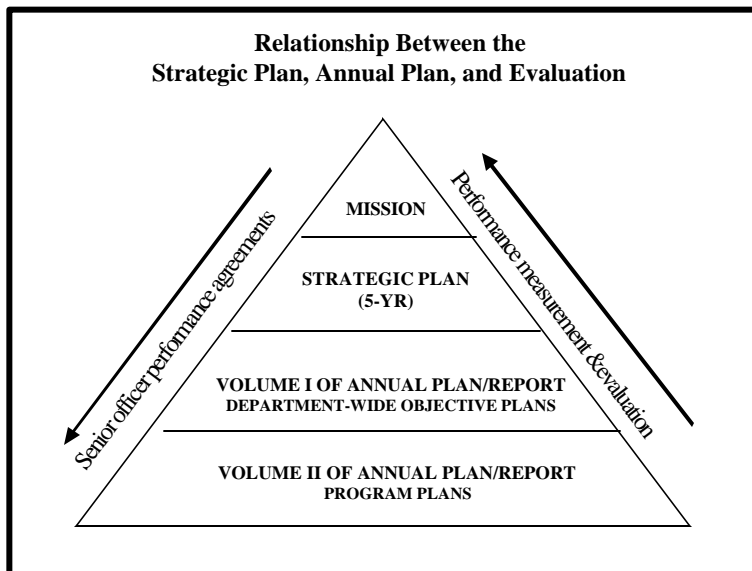


Exhibit 1 shows how the strategic plans and annual plans/reports are related and used. Our mission drives all our activities and feeds directly into the development of our goals and objectives found in the strategic plans. This new 5-year strategic plan outlines broad goals and objectives to be accomplished over the next five years. The annual plan/report then takes those objectives and breaks them down into annual strategies; gives each indicator a target for the upcoming year; and reports the extent to which prior-year targets are met. Volume I of the annual plan/report updates the strategic plan objectives and indicators and Volume II links the plan/report down to the program level. Performance measures and evaluation feedback information on accomplishments against desired results.

Department offices are held accountable for the results of plan. Performance agreements between senior officers and the deputy secretary translate the plan into specific activities and measurable results office-by-office. Each agreement identifies the relevant educational and management objectives in the strategic and annual plans for that Assistant Secretary.

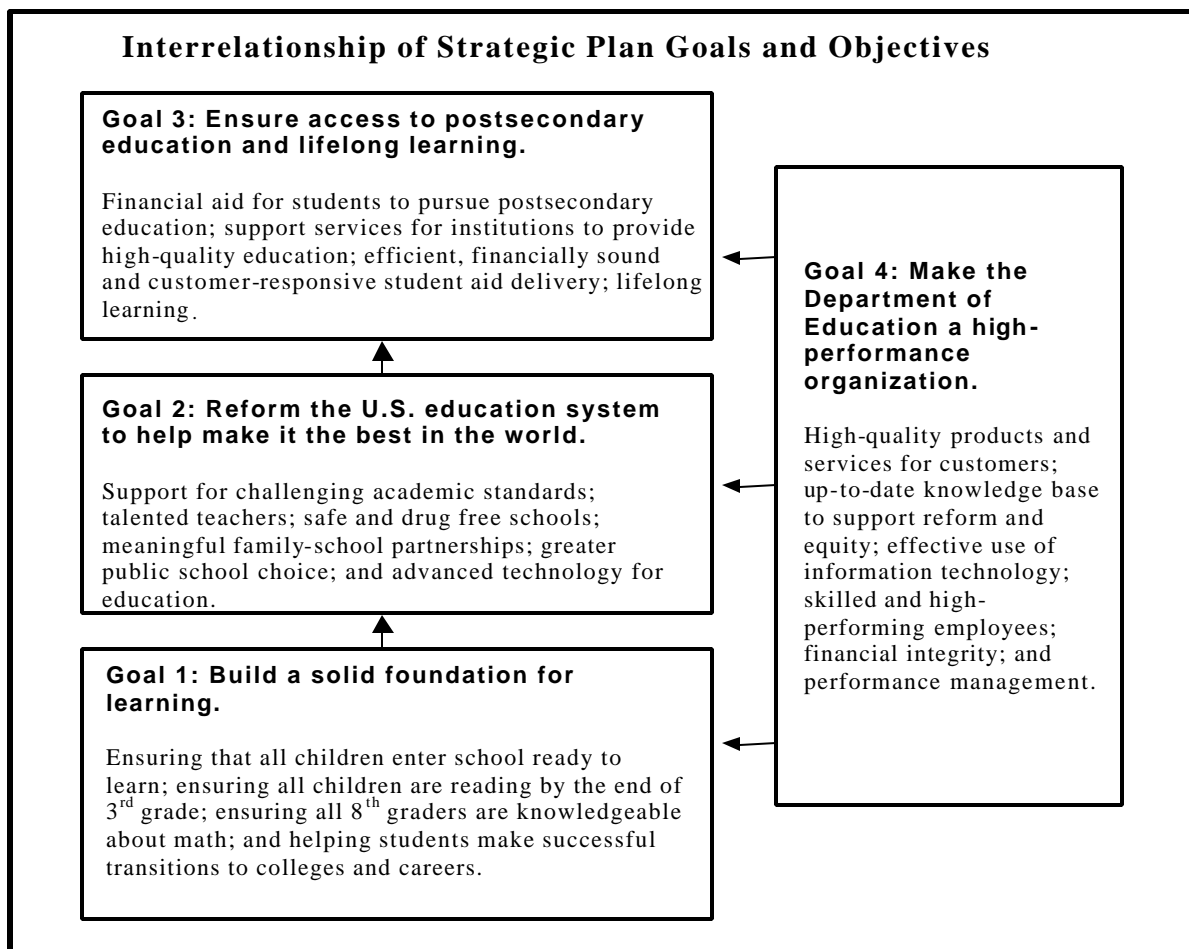
## The 2001-2005 Strategic Plan

The 2001-2005 Strategic Plan is a five-year plan that lays out the Department's long-term directions until 2005. It is structured around four major goals that support the agency's mission:

- *Goal 1: Build a solid foundation for learning for all children.*
- *Goal 2: Reform the U.S. education system to help make it the best in the world.*
- *Goal 3: Ensure access for all to high quality postsecondary education and lifelong learning.*
- *Goal 4: Make the Department of Education a high-performance organization.*

These are ambitious goals that reflect areas where Department leadership can influence outcomes, even where the Department does not have direct control. Under each goal, the plan identifies objectives supported by core strategies and performance indicators.

### Exhibit 2



## Development of the Plan

The Department of Education first developed a Strategic Plan in 1994 and revised that Plan again in 1997. That Plan is supporting transformation of the Department into a high-performance organization. The revisions in the new Strategic Plan reflect information, legislation, and policy directions from a variety of sources, including:

- President Clinton's Call to Action for American Education
- The Department's strategic and annual plans.
- Reports by the General Accounting Office (GAO) and the Education Department's Inspector General on needed management reforms.
- New employee surveys.
- Program evaluations, assessments, and statistical reports.
- Education drivers (as identified later in this section) that represent key emerging trends affecting education.
- Comments on earlier drafts by Congressional staff, OMB, and public respondents.

Within the Education Department, during the spring and summer of 2000, drafts of this plan were prepared and widely circulated within the Department. Meetings were held with key members of the Education Department leadership to receive feedback on the plan. Assistant secretaries were asked to discuss the plan with staff, obtain ideas for changes, and also begin to discuss how the plan would be implemented by their offices.

The Department consulted extensively with outside parties on this strategic plan, and made changes as a result of those consultations. Even where we did not make changes, we distributed the comments to appropriate offices to take into account when administering programs and new initiatives.

- ***The Education Community and the General Public.*** The Department's Web pages prominently displayed the Strategic Plan in Word and .PDF formats and a recent version of *Initiatives*, an electronic publication of the Department with a circulation of 13,000 individuals, solicited comments on the Plan. In addition, a call for comments was posted on the Department's Home Page for the duration of the comment period. Comments were received from teachers, parents, representatives of the business community, university students and professors, and advocates for young people with special needs, as well as from staff members of the Department. The Department also discussed specific objectives, strategies and measurement issues with a variety of stakeholders.
- ***Congress.*** Department representatives met with key Congressional staff to discuss strategic issues, provided copies of the draft strategic plan to Congressional authorizing, appropriations, budget, and government operations committees.
- ***General Accounting Office (GAO) and Education Department Inspector General (IG).*** The Department review of GAO and IG reports provided valuable guidance for identifying strategic management areas for improvement. The Department also received and took into consideration explicit comments on the draft plan from the Office of Inspector General.

- **Office of Management and Budget.** The Department discussed issues related to the Strategic Plan with OMB staff and provided drafts for OMB review.

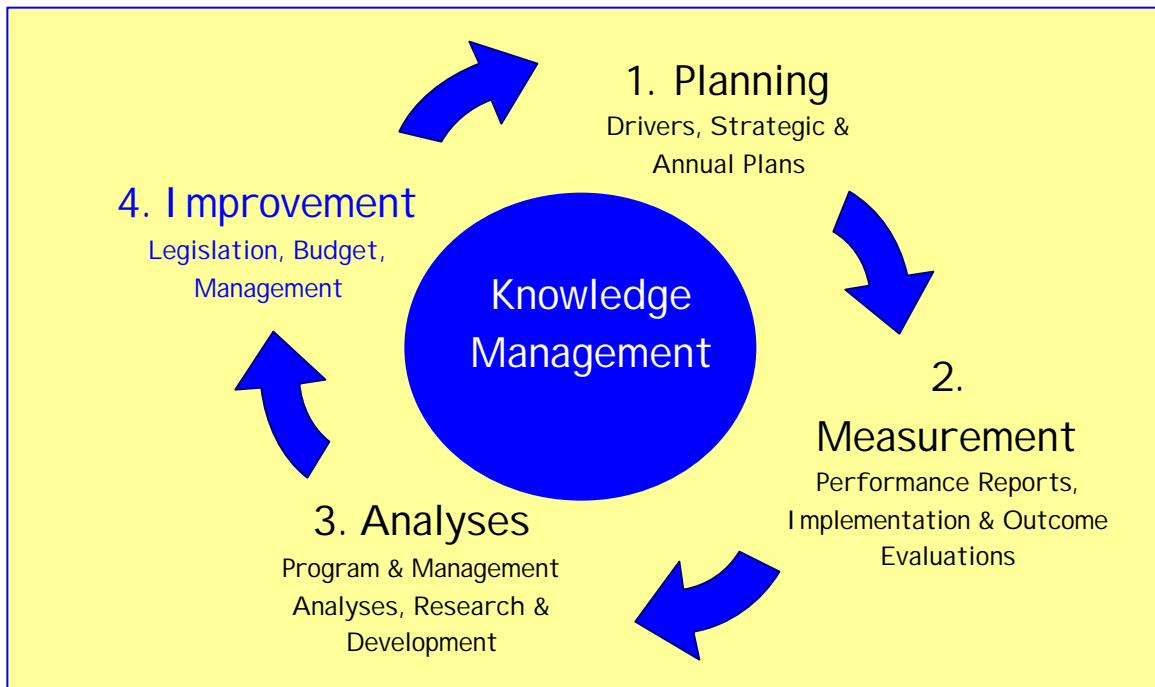
The Department’s outreach on the Strategic Plan does not stop with the comment period. The Education Department will be having ongoing consultation with its customers, including through focus groups and customer surveys. The Department’s has an electronic Strategic Plan mailbox for continuous feedback and comment from the public, which we will use to improve our annual performance plans and reports.

## Implementation and Accountability

The Strategic Plan must be part of an integrated Department-wide improvement strategy if it is to be an effective process for improvement. This strategy consists of four steps (Exhibit 3):

1. Planning itself, including external trends that shape objective and strategies.
2. Measurement of performance to evaluate success.
3. Analyses to identify improvement opportunities in the short-run, such as strengthening of basic operations, and in the long run through connection to research and development.
4. Improvement through introducing and monitoring changes in legislation, budget and management.

**Exhibit 3**  
**Planning Integrated Into Continuous Improvement**



The follow-on sections describe the implementation strategies and analyses for each of the goals and objectives. The drivers that represent key factors external to the Department that were considered in plan development are described below.

## Key Driving Factors for U.S. Department of Education

The 1980s were marked by a tremendous desire for change in American education and a growing national concern about the quality of teaching and learning. International comparisons of student achievement revealed both strengths and weaknesses in what and how America's schoolchildren were learning. Achievement gaps persisted between rich and poor students, between white and minority students, and between advantaged and at-risk students, so that full educational opportunity for every child seemed an almost unreachable goal, even as record numbers of youngsters were reaching school age.

In the 1990s, the Department of Education, state education agencies, school districts, and schools put a series of comprehensive reforms in place to provide a world-class education for all: bold measures to fix failing schools, benchmarks for measuring student progress and teacher quality, and accountability systems and innovations throughout the Nation's public schools.

Many of these reform efforts will continue even as our educational system faces additional, new demands. Since January 1993, the economy has generated over 22 million new jobs.<sup>1</sup> A higher proportion of the population aged 16 and over is employed now than ever before, and the unemployment rate, currently around 4 percent, is lower than it has been since 1970.<sup>2</sup> In this era of prosperity and economic growth, it is essential that we examine national trends and think strategically about how to address the educational needs of tomorrow's workforce. We must ask who tomorrow's students will be and what they will need to be successful. We must also consider how to ensure that education opportunities include all children.

The Department of Education has identified eight important elements that will drive educational policy and programs during the next five years and beyond:

1. Meeting the demands of continuing enrollment growth;
2. Meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population;
3. Moving standards into the classroom;
4. Applying knowledge of effective instructional practices;
5. Improving the recruitment, preparation, and training of high-quality teachers;
6. Addressing rapid advances in instructional technology;
7. Meeting the demand for postsecondary education and lifelong learning; and
8. Holding Federal programs accountable for performance.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "National Employment, Hours, and Earnings" (Washington, DC: September 15, 2000). Available at : <http://146.142.4.24/cgi-bin/SeriesHist?ees00000001>.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Unemployment Rate – Civilian Labor Force (LFS21000000)" in Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (Washington, DC: 8 August 2000). Available at: <http://www.bls.gov/cps/home.htm>.

In each of these eight areas, the Department of Education has already made important gains, but additional effort is still needed.

## **1. Meeting the Demands of Continuing Enrollment Growth**

The Census Bureau projects that births will increase continuously through at least 2028, and after 2028, the number of births is not projected to decrease as it did after the baby boom.<sup>3</sup> The rise in the birth rate has obvious implications for school enrollments. As the baby boom echo generation continues to enter school, total enrollment is expected to grow to 54.3 million by the year 2008, an increase of 6 percent from 1996.<sup>4</sup> Elementary school enrollment will rise by 0.8 million, secondary enrollment by 2.1 million, and college enrollment by 1.7 million.<sup>5</sup>

Rising enrollments will require growing numbers of teachers and increased classroom space, needs made more acute by national efforts to provide smaller class sizes and smaller schools.<sup>6</sup> While it is clear that new school construction will be required, it is equally clear that new construction will not, by itself, meet demands for classroom space. Repair and remodeling of existing schools will also be needed. A recent NCES study, *Condition of America's Public School Facilities: 1999*, indicates that 24 percent of schools have at least one building in less than adequate condition and that \$127 billion will be needed to bring the nation's schools into good overall condition.

The Department of Education addresses the consequences of increasing student enrollment in a number of ways. The Department of Education provides technical assistance and financial support to state and local educational agencies for the repair, renovation, and construction of schools. Qualified Zone Academy Bonds, created in 1997, offer financial assistance to high-poverty areas for school repair and renovation. Since 1998, \$400 billion in annual bonding authority has been provided, and over twenty states have benefited from this program. The Class-Size Reduction Initiative provides funds to hire additional teachers, alleviating overcrowding in classrooms. The Department of Education also supports the publication and dissemination of research on the modernization and construction of school buildings through its own documents, like *Schools as Centers of Community: A Citizen's Guide for Planning and Design*, and by funding the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, an information source for those who plan, design, build, operate, and maintain K-12 schools.

### ***Implications for the Future:***

- State and local school officials will continue to require financial support from the Federal government to repair existing schools as well as construct new buildings, especially in areas with small or declining tax bases.
- The Department of Education must provide leadership, support, and information to meet the challenges and opportunities of creating adequate space for teachers and students

---

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "National Population Projections: 2000 to 2100" (Washington, DC: 2000)

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2008* (Washington, DC: 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion of reduced-size classes, see the summer 1999 issue of *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* (21:2) entitled "Class Size: Issues and New Findings".

- The Federal government must provide leadership and support for state and local educational agencies seeking to recruit and retain the additional teachers needed to serve increasing numbers of students.

## **2. Meeting the Needs of an Increasingly Diverse Student Population**

America's schools face the challenge of educating an increasingly diverse student population. Minority students accounted for over one-third (37 percent) of public school enrollments in 1997, up from 30 percent in 1986. African-American students are the largest minority group (17 percent of all students), but the most rapidly growing groups are Hispanics and Asians (14 percent and 4 percent, respectively). From 1986 to 1997, the number of Hispanic students increased by 69 percent and the number of Asian students increased by 62 percent.<sup>7</sup> Many of these students are language-minority children who have limited proficiency in the English language. In addition, IDEA requires that schools educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible. This requirement has led to increased inclusion of special education students in regular classrooms, meaning that schools and teachers are educating students with a wide range of ability levels and special needs. America must also remember its unique responsibility to meet the educational needs of its Native American population.

Federal education programs support school systems and communities in their efforts to provide effective educational opportunities to all students, with a particular focus on those with special needs. The Department is working with states to ensure that their assessment and accountability systems include students with limited English proficiency and students with disabilities through appropriate accommodations. The Department's Hispanic Education Action Plan was launched to help Latino youth increase their academic achievement, graduate from high school, and enroll in postsecondary institutions. Enhancements to programs including GEAR UP, TRIO, student financial aid, and tuition tax credits have expanded the opportunities for all students to pursue higher education.

### ***Implications for the Future:***

- The future productivity of the U.S. labor force hinges on our Nation's ability to provide access to high-quality education that meets the educational needs of all young people, regardless of ethnic group, income level, and ability. Schools need to recruit teachers, administrators, nurses and librarians with multilingual skills, and they need training to expand their ability to support and engage diverse cultures within each school community. The Department of Education will work to encourage these activities.
- Technology can be a helpful resource, providing tools to support English language learning as well as to communicate curriculum content to students who have not yet mastered the English language. The Department of Education will work to expand its ability to provide access to such technology.
- State assessment and accountability systems need to include all students, including those with limited English proficiency or disabilities, to ensure that schools and districts are accountable for the performance of students with special needs. The Department of

---

<sup>7</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics: 1999* (Washington, DC: May 2000), Table 45.



Education must find ways to see that states include all students in assessment and accountability systems.

- Federal education programs need to support school systems and communities in their efforts to provide effective educational opportunities to all students, with a particular focus on those with special needs. The increasingly diverse student population in American schools provides an opportunity for education systems to prepare all students to live and work in a heterogeneous nation and interdependent world.

### **3. Moving Standards Into the Classroom**

High standards improve instruction so that all students have the opportunities to succeed. During the 1980s a national consensus grew that all students should meet high standards – not just affluent, suburban, or college-bound students, but *all* students. Federal legislation enacted during the 1990s, including Goals 2000 and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, supported the development of state standards, aligned assessments, and school accountability improvement systems. Each of these initiatives focused on accountability for student performance based on high standards and standards-based assessments supported by intensive professional development and aligned curriculum.

Forty-nine states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have adopted academic content standards to hold their schools accountable and have at least begun the process of aligning student assessment systems with those standards. School report cards and interventions to turn around low performing schools have been implemented in most states. Recent analyses of National Assessment of Educational Progress data indicate that those states that were the first to adopt rigorous standards and aligned accountability systems in the early 1990's had the highest growth in students' test scores.<sup>8</sup>

#### ***Implications for the Future:***

Now that standards-based accountability systems are coming on line, the Nations' schools will need to increasingly focus on instructional strategies and curricula that will help students meet the high standards laid out for them.

- The Department of Education will encourage textbook publishers, states and school districts to provide new curricula aligned with higher content and performance standards.
- The Department of Education must support intensive training for new and continuing teachers and other educators to learn new approaches and to hone their skills in order to help all students maximize their capabilities.
- The Department of Education must focus attention and resources on low-performing schools so that their students receive improved education services needed to meet high standards.

---

<sup>8</sup> (*Improving Student Achievement: What NAEP State Test Scores Tell Us*, David W. Grissmer, Ann Flanagan, Jennifer Kawata, Stephanie Williamson, Rand, MR-924-EDU, 2000)

#### 4. Applying Knowledge of Effective Instructional Practices

Effective instruction framed around research-driven practices will move our students toward the goal of reading well and independently by the third grade and mastering challenging mathematics by the eighth grade. Reading is the foundation of all other skills essential for learning, yet, based on the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 62 percent of fourth-graders read at the basic level or higher. Although there has been some recent progress, two-thirds of fourth-graders in high poverty schools were unable to reach the basic level, compared with a quarter of fourth-graders in wealthier schools. The 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates that the gap is narrowing in mathematics. However, the mathematical performance of U.S. students is weaker in the middle grades and upper grades than observed in other industrialized countries.

Clearly, more must be done to improve the teaching and learning of reading and mathematics in our Nation's schools. Fortunately, we know a lot about what works in teaching reading and mathematics. The National Research Council report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* laid out a series of research findings for effective reading instruction using a balanced approach that provides students with opportunities to develop phonemic awareness and comprehension skills, to practice with writing skills, and to participate in varied reading activities (National Reading Panel). Upcoming Research Council reports for mathematics and the *Eager-to-Learn* report on early childhood education should spell out in considerable detail the body of research supporting effective instructional practices in each area.

The Department of Education has launched a number of program changes and new programs that are designed to help support effective instruction of reading and mathematics. A key requirement for Title I school-wide programs is to use school-wide reform strategies that are based on effective means of improving achievement. The Reading Excellence Act (REA) requires that reading instruction be based on scientifically based reading research. The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR/D) program requires that schools adopt comprehensive school reforms using strategies based on reliable research and effective practices. In its first year, the Class Size Reduction Program reduced average class size for 1.7 million students from 23 to 18 students in the targeted grades.<sup>9</sup> This program responds to the growing body of research showing that students attending small classes in the early grades make more rapid educational progress than students in larger classes and that these gains persist in later grades.

##### ***Implications for the Future:***

- The Department should place a greater emphasis on the wide dissemination of information on particularly effective and promising approaches. Such information should be made available through a variety of means to reach different audiences, including through extensive professional development opportunities using Web-based technologies.
- The Department of Education needs to incorporate findings of the early childhood and mathematics research reports into its program focus and outreach activities.

---

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *The Class-Size Reduction Program: Boosting Student Achievement in Schools Across the Nation, A First-Year Report*. (Washington, DC: September 2000), p. 2.

- The Department of Education should review school-wide models for their effectiveness and consistency with the research.

## **5. Improving the Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of High-Quality Teachers.**

There is universal agreement that every child deserves a caring, competent and qualified teacher. Research shows that the quality of teaching in our Nation’s classrooms is the most important in-school factor for improving student achievement. Today, however, we face several challenges to meeting standards of high-quality teaching. Over the next 10 years, our nation’s schools will need more than 2 million teachers, most of whom will be first-time teachers. All teachers, more than ever before, must be able to educate an increasingly diverse student population, and they must be able to educate students to meet high academic content standards. In addition, teachers need supportive environments within school—with strong school leadership from principals and administrators—to ensure that their classrooms become learning communities where all teachers and students work to their highest potential.

Through the Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants programs, the Department of Education supports the recruitment of high-quality teachers, fundamental improvements in postsecondary teacher education programs, and comprehensive reforms in state licensing requirements for new teachers. The Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers to Use Technology program promotes reforms in teacher preparation to ensure that future teachers can effectively integrate technology into their classroom practice. Federal funds for on-going professional development come from several Department of Education programs, including the Eisenhower Professional Development program, Title I, special education, and vocational and bilingual education programs.

### ***Implications for the Future:***

- The Department of Education should continue to support new K-16 partnerships: teaching and learning will improve only when institutions of higher education are connected to K-12 schools so that teachers’ initial preparation and on-going development are grounded in practical experience and aligned with student content and performance standards.
- The Department of Education should encourage the continued recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers including supporting strategies for increasing teacher pay, reducing red tape for teachers, and creating an ethnically diverse teaching force.
- The Department of Education should ensure that teachers are trained to effectively integrate technology into their instructional practice so that all students can succeed in a technologically advanced society.
- The Department of Education should encourage innovative approaches to recruiting, preparing and supporting principals, school administrators and other school leaders to strengthen in-school working conditions for teachers.
- The Department of Education should develop improved methods of measuring teacher quality—including assessments of classroom performance—to ensure that all teachers are meeting standards of high quality.

## 6. Addressing Rapid Advances in Instructional Technology

Instructional technology has the potential to transform education. In classrooms in which little has changed since the invention of the printing press, technology could provide access to learning to any student anywhere. With access to technology, students would be able to advance at their own pace, freeing the teacher to give individual attention to the needs and interests of each student. Technology allows even remote rural schools and schools in high poverty neighborhood's access to world-class digital libraries, and to work with experts anywhere. Providing technology-enhanced professional development anywhere, any time, could help teachers improve their teaching. Outside the school building, technology has the potential to empower parents and teachers to share information about their children's performance on an ongoing basis, using school websites, e-mail, online homework helpers and other resources. At the postsecondary level, distance education is a growing phenomenon that may radically alter how postsecondary education is delivered.

In 1994, only 35 percent of public schools, and 3 percent of classrooms had access to the Internet. According to a 1999 NCES survey of public school teachers, however, 99 percent of teachers reported that their schools had computers with Internet access and 84 percent had computers and Internet in their classrooms.<sup>10</sup> The Department of Education has had a role in bringing about these changes. Through technology leadership programs such as the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund, Technology Innovation Challenge Grants, and Star Schools, as well as multi-purpose educational programs like Title 1, Eisenhower and IDEA, the Department of Education has contributed to progress in technology access. The Department of Education, in conjunction with the Department of Commerce, has helped make technology infrastructure and Internet connectivity available to schools through the E-Rate. At the postsecondary level, the Department supports the effective use of distance education through the Learning Anytime Anywhere Partnership program.

Much remains to be done. Teachers who report feeling well prepared to use technology use it more frequently, and use it in a variety of ways for improved instruction. However, during the last three years the majority of teachers spent a total of eight hours or less in professional development activities on use of computers and the Internet. Teachers who had received nine or more hours of professional development reported feeling more prepared to use technology than did those who had received eight or fewer hours of instruction. Only one in eight teachers spent the equivalent of four days during the last three years on these activities.<sup>11</sup> Distance learning programs need to be enhanced to assist more students in completing postsecondary degrees.

### *Implications for the Future:*

Based on what has been learned since the issuance of the Department of Education's first Educational Technology plan in 1996, we must work to reach five goals for technology in education:

---

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Teachers' Tools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Report on Teachers' Use of Technology* (Washington, DC: September 2000), p. ii.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii-iv.

- Ensure universal access to technology for teaching and learning at all levels of education.
- Ensure that all teachers can use technology effectively.
- Ensure that all students are technology literate.
- Provide research and evaluation information that shapes the next generation of technology applications for improved teaching and learning.
- Foster innovation and adaptability in education to harness the information age for improved education.

Achieving these goals requires that the Department of Education provide effective leadership, working with state and local educational agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to facilitate integration of technology with classroom instruction and learning.<sup>12</sup>

## **7. Meeting the Demand for Postsecondary Education and Lifelong Learning**

With the advent of new job markets in technology and industry, more employers are demanding that workers have higher level technical, literacy, and communication skills to keep pace with the changing work environment. Education has changed too – with increased engagement of older students at traditional “bricks and mortar” institutions, and the growth of more flexible on-line and customized forms of training. The demand for lifelong learning has grown significantly in recent years. Between 1990 and 1996, for example, the percent of undergraduate college students over the age of 24 increased 18 percent, most of whom enrolled on a part-time basis. About 90 million adults participated in formal learning opportunities in 1999, an increase of 55 percent above the participation level in 1991. College completion rates, however, remain low. Only half of those who begin a degree program at four-year institutions actually complete degrees within six years at the schools at which they began. Completion rates are also lower for low-income and minority students than they are for wealthier and non-minority students.

To meet the demand for lifelong learning, the Department supports a number of programs and activities that expand access to a quality education for all adults. The Department has steadily increased Federal aid to college students, including non-traditional aged students, and, through the U.S. Department of Treasury, has extended educational tax credits to individuals enrolled in lifelong learning courses. In addition, the Department is working on improving the state of adult literacy by collaborating with States to provide sound instruction to individuals in need of basic literacy skills.

### ***Implications for the Future:***

The future success of lifelong learning depends on a variety of measures that will help sustain its growth and improve its quality.

- The Department of Education must encourage collaboration between educational institutions and business and industry in order to ensure that the right skills are being taught.

---

<sup>12</sup> A. Krueger, "How Computers Have Changed the Wage Structure: Evidence from Micro Data 1984-1989" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* Feb. 1993: pp.33-60.

- The Department of Education must support efforts to harness the potential power of distance education to ensure that learning takes place anywhere, anytime -- cheaply and efficiently for all segments of society.
- The Department of Education must support efforts by educational providers to better engage low-literacy learners in order to increase persistence and completion in adult learning programs.
- The Department of Education must expand access to postsecondary education and lifelong learning opportunities.

## **8. Holding Federal Programs Accountable for Performance**

A major objective must be to increase the confidence of the American people in the capability of the Department of Education and the Federal Government to deliver educational program results. This goal can only be achieved by both improving program effectiveness and encouraging increased public accountability for program results. This requires us to adopt an increased focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction. It is incumbent upon us, as it is for all public agencies, to operate in a fully open and accountable manner.

The Department of Education holds itself accountable for results in many ways. We make our strategic goals and programmatic targets available to the Congress and to the American people. To comply with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), we prepare annual accountability reports in which we present the challenges we face, our accomplishments, the levels of customer satisfaction we have attained, and the responses to issues raised by informed reviewers, such as the General Accounting Office and the Inspector General, of our activities and performance. We are building effective delivery systems for Federal funds with state and local education agencies as they are our partners in the American education system and we are jointly responsible for the education of our Nation's children.

### ***Implications for the Future:***

- The Department of Education will continue to engage in a dialogue with the American people so they know what our performance goals are and how well we are achieving them.
- The Department of Education's senior officers and managers, through agency appraisal systems, will be held accountable for effective and efficient program and agency-wide operations
- The Department of Education will increase the proportion of resources allocated to ensuring that the agency is performance driven and operates in direct support of its mission.
- The Department of Education will apply modern information technology to obtain timely, efficient, and accurate performance information.
- The Department of Education will develop performance measurement and evaluation partnerships with state and local education agencies through technical assistance and streamlining reporting burden and developing the capacity to produce timely and accurate program performance data practices to ensure that our partners have the tools.

The rapidly changing nature of education in the United States coupled with the country's growing concern about the quality of teaching and learning make it vitally important that the Department of Education act strategically in planning changes in the programs it offers. Recognizing the factors that will drive educational change in the future was an important step in formulating the Department's Strategic Plan. The Department's goals and objectives, outlined in this Strategic Plan, are designed to meet the challenges represented by the drivers discussed above and its statutory obligations.